UNITED
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CERD

International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
Fifty-seventh session
31 July - 25 August 2000

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES
PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the
Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Sweden

1. The Committee considered the thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Sweden, submitted as one document (CERD/C/362/Add.5), at its 1417th and 1418th meetings (CERD/C/SR.1417 and 1418), held on 10 and 11 August 2000. At its 1431st meeting (CERD/C/SR.1431), held on 22 August 2000, it adopted the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the report of Sweden which followed the general guidelines for the presentation of State party reports and provided relevant and updated information about the measures taken to implement the Convention since the consideration of the twelfth periodic report. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive and frank dialogue it had with the State party.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the recent legislative initiatives undertaken by the State party including the Act on National Minorities in Sweden, the Act on Immigrant Integration Policy, the Act on Countering Ethnic Discrimination in Working Life, the Ethnic Discrimination Ombudsman Act, the amendment to the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression and to the Criminal Code concerning incitement to racial discrimination, and the Act on Responsibility for Electronic Bulletin Boards.

4. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the State party has set up a National Integration Office to promote and facilitate the implementation of its new integration policy and to monitor and evaluate developments as they relate to the ethnic and cultural diversity of the society as a whole.

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5. The Committee welcomes the appointment of the General Commission on Swedish Local Democracy to encourage broader participation in local government of people with immigrant backgrounds.

6. The Committee welcomes the additional initiatives to combat racial discrimination and xenophobia, including, the establishment of the Commission for the Study of Racist Crimes; the development of a plan of action by the Prosecutor General to reinforce the measures against crimes with racist or xenophobic motives; the implementation of programmes such as "EXIT" to counteract the activities of racist organizations; the reinforcement of training for prison and probation officials in countering prejudice, racism and xenophobia among staff; the publication and dissemination by the Ethnic Discrimination Ombudsman of resource materials on, inter alia, non-discrimination in recruitment; the introduction of measures to enhance employment opportunities, including within the public sector, for immigrants through, inter alia, language training; the implementation of additional measures to ensure that children of asylum-seekers are afforded equal access to education and health care; and the expansion of awareness-raising initiatives through, inter alia, books on the Holocaust.

7. The State party's effort to include NGOs in the preparation of its thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports and generally in the reporting process is welcomed by some members of the Committee.

8. The Committee encourages the intention to set up a National Action Plan against Racism, Xenophobia and Ethnic Discrimination and encourages the State party to continue its efforts in this regard.

9. The State party's efforts to disseminate the Convention, as well as the concluding observations and the summary records of its previous meetings with the Committee, among Sami and other minority groups, NGOs, trade unions and the wider public are welcomed.

C. Concerns and recommendations

10. The Committee is concerned that a recent upsurge in racism and xenophobia has been seen which has given rise to increased neo-Nazi violence, especially among youth. In this context, the Committee notes with concern, the increasing popularity of "white power" music which promotes hatred against ethnic minorities. The Committee encourages the State party to continue its efforts to arrest the upsurge in racism and xenophobia, prevent and punish racist neo-Nazi violence and prosecute any persons whose actions incite to racial hatred.

11. While the Committee notes that the State party has adopted some measures to promote greater awareness about the Roma minority and to encourage greater participation of Roma in the society, it is concerned about the difficulties which Roma continue to experience in exercising their rights. The Committee recommends that the State party submit in its next periodic report additional information on the situation of the Roma minority, particularly as regards education, employment and housing. The State party is requested to pay particular attention to the situation of Roma women and children.

12. While the Committee notes the new legislation which gives individuals the right to use the Sami language in legal and administrative proceedings, it stresses that this right is recognized only in respect of some geographic regions. It is recommended that the State party consider the extension of these rights to all Sami territory.

13. Concern is expressed over the issue of land rights of the Sami people, in particular hunting and fishing rights which are threatened by, inter alia, the privatization of traditional Sami lands. The Committee recommends that the Government introduce legislation recognizing traditional Sami land rights and reflecting the centrality of reindeer husbandry to the way of life of Sweden's

indigenous people. The Committee further recommends that the State party ratify ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

14. The Committee expresses concern about increasing de facto residential segregation. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure compliance with the law against discrimination in the allocation of housing and in its next periodic report supply information on the measures taken to address such segregation.

15. In light of article 4 of the Convention, the Committee is concerned that existing legislation does not prohibit and penalize all organizations and propaganda activities that promote or incite racial hatred and discrimination. The Committee recommends that the State party declare illegal and prohibit any organization which promotes or incites racial discrimination. The Committee calls attention to its general recommendation XV in this regard.

16. While the Committee notes the enactment of the Citizenship Status Discrimination in Working Life Act, as well as the recent decline in unemployment in the State party, it remains concerned about the difficult access to employment of members of ethnic minorities. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to increase its efforts to facilitate the occupational integration of all persons belonging to ethnic minorities into the public administration.

17. Concern is expressed at the increasing incidence of racial discrimination in restaurants, other public places, and with regard to access to services. The Committee recommends that effective action be taken, including administrative measures as well as criminal prosecutions to ensure that access to places or services intended for use by the general public is not denied on grounds of national or ethnic origin, contrary to article 5 (f) of the Convention.

18. While the Committee notes that the official statistics of the State party do not contain data which distinguishes people based on their ethnic origin, it recommends that the State party provide in its next periodic report more comprehensive and updated statistical information along the lines of paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Committee's guidelines regarding the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties.

19. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake all appropriate measures to ensure that the report and these concluding observations are widely distributed to the public. It also recommends that the State party continue and develop its dialogue with civil society, in particular with the non-governmental organizations.

20. The Committee further recommends that the State party's fifteenth periodic report be an updated report and that it address the points raised during the consideration of the report.